Youth Information Book

Revised February 2017
Welcome to Youth Care & Beyond,

We are happy that you are in our program. We understand that no one is crazy about being in a group home. We understand that you may feel that you shouldn’t have to be here and just want to go back home. We agree with you. We wish there were not group homes too and that everyone could stay home. However, that is not real. We can promise you however that we will work to help you get to a safe place where you can do well. We hope that is your family and your home. But if it is not, we will do our best to help you find somewhere you want to go and can do well.

We have a lot of youth who have left and are very successful. We hope you will be one of them. Our placement time is anywhere from 4-12 months. It is really up to you and how hard you try. We promise that when you have completed the program if you don’t have a discharge date, that we will personally write your judge and caseworker and tell them how well you did. We will then help them find you a place.

There will be times that things seem hard, but we are here.

Praying the best for you,

Tracy Lynn Pearson  
Executive Director

Pastor Michael T. Moten  
Program Director
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Helping you be successful in our program

This book is written for the young adults in our Transitions Group Home: The purpose is to help you be successful. It will give answers to many of your questions.

Here are a few basic ideas that explain a lot of reasons why we do what we are doing:

1. Youth Care & Beyond Inc. is family and you just joined our family. The purpose of our family is to help each and every one of us get better.

Every child here is here for treatment. And in our family, is where the treatment takes place. Of course, you never lose your family at home, and we will work very hard to rebuild family bonds and help with family reunification.

You are not in jail or serving your time here. But while you are here, you are part of our family. And even when you leave, you will always be part of our family without losing your own.

2. We are not only a family, we are a family place where you can receive the treatment you need to get better. One of the basic components of the therapy/treatment is family life. It’s not the whole of it, but it’s a big, big part. We’re all familiar with “street talk.” With jail or a lock-up facility, the prisoners disrespect the guards and the guards disrespect the prisoners. It’s pretty clear.

The first two rules we have here are:

1. We adults will never disrespect you. We promise you that, if you think we are disrespecting you, you will have to let us know because we may not know how you feel. There is a difference between teaching, addressing behaviors and being disrespectful. What we mean is that disrespect is often sarcastic comments, name calling, cursing, rolling eyes, smacking lips, etc. We will speak in a respectful tone and we will care about you. If you have questions about the difference, please discuss with staff.

2. You should not disrespect anyone else here, neither kids or adults.

We are looking for boys and girls who will take advantage of the opportunities that Youth Care & Beyond Inc. provides. Learn how you can take advantage of these
opportunities to get better. There is a lot of loneliness inside our boys and girls and a lot of hurt and we are here to help get rid of that hurt and loneliness.

Because we are a family and here for treatment, one of the big things that we emphasize is cooperation between youth and adults. We know that outside of Youth Care & Beyond Inc. so many kids in middle schools and high schools spend a lot of time trying to figure out ways to irritate their parents or other authority figures. That’s a bad idea and we work very hard for that not to happen here. We respect each other and we respect each other in ways that are meant to help you grow.

So, a lot of the things we say you can do and you can’t do are made to build on that respect.

We are not here to punish you. We are here to teach you. In order for you to learn you will have to understand that the way you have handled things haven’t been the best. You may feel you are right. We understand that, but you will have to get used to doing things a new way that we will teach you. The quicker you agree and try things this way, the better you will do in our program. We spend a lot of time teaching and you will spend a lot of time learning about three things:

Skills: You learn all kinds of skills here starting the first day you are with us. They are a key to your success.

Develop relationships: We will help you learn how to develop relationships, first here at Youth Care & Beyond Inc. both with peers and adults and, also most especially, at home. We also teach how to build friendship skills.

Develop self-discipline: Our goal is to help you get your needs met in pro-social ways. So many times before, you have been frustrated by not being able to get your needs met because it was done in illegal or anti-social ways. We can help you develop self-discipline, self-control, and
develop anger management and depression management and all kinds of other things. These are very important for you.

Because we are a treatment family, there are certain kinds of relationships that we want to build. We want to build strong relationships with your own family, your parents or guardians. We all have to learn not to manipulate. So, if a boy or girl calls mom or dad and tells them big lies about what is happening here so that mom or dad get all upset and come roaring in angry, that won’t help anybody. So, we need to learn how to be honest and that will take some time and that will take some patience.

We know, too, that our own families need to learn skills and to build relationships and also to develop self-discipline. We’re hoping that your own family will learn these skills with us. It takes the whole Village to raise a child and every good mom and dad wants to develop the skills and the relationships and the self-discipline they need to be a good mom or dad.
Below are many questions our youth ask when they come into our program?

Q: Do I live in a house?
A: Yes. This is a family so you will live with a family. You will live in a home that is in the community. We hope this will help you take care of yours and other belongings. We also know that in a home it is easier to be comfortable to participate in treatment.

Q: How many kids are there in a room?
A: You will have probably one or two roommates. The rooms are appointed in such a way that there is plenty of room for you and a roommate. Work real hard to become a friend of your roommate.

Please decorate your side of the room, put up things like pictures of your family in the approved location. Of course, you will not want to put up things that send a pro-drug or alcohol or violence message. Why? Because we are a family and we are here to get better and those things don’t help us get better. Gang affiliated materials are also not allowed. Please ask your Family Model Coordinator if you are unsure.

Q: What about meals?
A: You are part of a family and our families have three meals each day and usually a snack after school and one before bedtime. This provides us with plenty of food. And, more importantly, meals are a very important time in our homes. They allow us to practice our conversation skills, get to know each other better, have a good time, eat good, tasty food, pray together and enjoy each other. This makes us a family.
Q: May I have an alternative meal?
A: It’s okay to provide an alternative like sandwich or other food, but only if you are allergic or have a religious reason to not eat the food we provide. For example, if you are allergic to beef, we can provide you a chicken sandwich instead of beef sandwich. If you do not want to eat what we serve you can make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

Q: Who cooks the meals at our home?
A: Meal preparation is done by the entire family. We feel that sitting down and eating meals together is an important of our family values. All youth help cook and prepare meals. Please don’t just open cans of things and heat them up or don’t just take things out of the freezer and put them in the microwave. Make a little extra effort. The more effort you make, the more the meal is a real family meal. You learn how to cook. And please ask the other kids to let you cook your favorite family meal. Just as you want them to enjoy your favorite family meal, be sure to tell the others when they cook their family meal that you like it very much. Meals are an important family time. Family Model staff are present at meals.

Q: Do we ever go out to eat or bring in pizza or Chinese?
A: Remember, a restaurant or a take-out meal is a good idea every once in a while. But such meals are not as warm and family-like as home cooked meals. We have family meals on Thanksgiving and Christmas and Easter and the Fourth of July. Why? Because that’s what families do. It brings us together. Also, we have to watch our home budgets. So we can’t go out to eat too often.

Q: What if when I come I don’t eat anything but chicken and French fries?
A: You will have a wonderful opportunity to expand things that you like to eat. We have found that you put a smile on your face and start eating things you are not familiar with that pretty soon you will get to like them.
Q: Am I in charge of keeping my room clean?
A: Yes. And in a family, there are family chores. You have to make your own bed and clean your own room and make the place look good. All of the family would like to have our house look good. In addition, all of us in the house have family chores. One or two kids clean the kitchen and another cleans the living room. We like to have a clean house. It’s part of being family. We even have a manager system where one of the other youth helps you learn the ropes, but we will explain that later.

Q: May I have a cell phone?
A: This depends on your system, trust level, and treatment team approval. A cell phone is a privilege. It must be turned in to the Family Model staff every night and when requested while you are in the home. Your family model staff may ask to see your phone and look at it during the day. This is ok and one of the ways we help show the court you are being responsible. You are responsible for paying the bill.

Q: How often can I use the phone?
A: Family homes are busy places and 6 to 8 boys or girls can tie up the phone for a long time. Please talk to your coordinators about the phone rules in your home. Calling friends is based on privileges. This motivates you to work on your pleasantness and cooperation within the house.

Q: Will I get passes home?
A: As we said before we are not trying to replace your family. Maintaining contact with your family is important if it is allowable. We do want your home passes to be successful. They are a part of your treatment in our program. This means home passes are necessary for you to learn to be successful when you return home.

Q: When will I get my first visit?
A: Home visits have to be approved by your entire treatment team. This team includes your Probation Officer and/or Caseworker (if applicable), and Youth Care staff. Your first visit may be
anywhere from 2-4 weeks after you arrive, but typically it is after the first 30 days. Home visits start with a day pass or hours away. After a few successful hours away you may have an overnight. Once that is successful you may have a full weekend pass.

**Q: What about holidays?**
A: There are special times of year when you may have an extended pass. These times are usually Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, Spring Break and during the summer. These visits follow the same guidelines as above but may allow you to stay longer than 2 days if approved.

**Q: Can I lose my home visits?**
A: Yes. We need to be certain that when you go home you can be successful having less supervision than at Youth Care. These decisions are made by the entire treatment team.

**Q: Can I write letters to my friends and can I call them?**
A: Youth Care & Beyond Inc. is a treatment facility. Our treatment specialists are professionals and experts in helping you get better. As a condition for treatment, they tell us that telephone contact with previous friends is allowed only with treatment team permission. The treatment team will help decide which friends are good influences and who might try to prevent you from working on your treatment. Sometimes previous friends were part of the reason why you had problems. When that is the case the treatment team may even limit contact.

**Q: Are there phone guidelines for families as well?**
A: Yes. The rule is that parents need to establish a call day of the week. This helps with busy schedules and ensures that you will be home when your family calls. Remember phone calls and letter writing should be therapeutic for the youth. Therefore, contact gives you and your parents the opportunity to work on your goals in mending your relationship.
Q: Can we have cable TV in our house?
A: Yes, all the homes have basic cable, but it is subject to approval of TV shows. The homes also have Netflix and Hulu.

Q: How about DVDs, video game systems are other such items?
A: Yes, each home has at least one game system. This is a privilege and is earned with good behavior. You may not have a personal game system in your room. Again, this is to prevent it breaking or getting stolen.

Q: Can people go through my belongings without permission?
A: It sometimes happens that another youth will go through your drawers and look at what you have. This is wrong and it is not allowed. Please report it right away. The other youth will be consequated. You can give permission in advance. However, we recommend that borrowing or lending possessions are not good ideas because, more often than not, it causes trouble in a house. It shouldn’t surprise you to know that if we believe there is something unsafe or illegal in your room (like drugs, alcohol, stolen money or items, weapons or other items) that a room search can be done. We can do a room search. Why? Because Family Model staff are like parents and they need to make sure the house is safe and that kids are not hurting themselves or others. We will check your bags after visits and school and will ask you to empty your pockets.

Q: How is a room search done?
A: Family Model staff need a “reasonable cause” to engage in a room search. The purpose is to keep the house safe so that youth do not harm themselves or others. If it is beneficial for a youth to be present during the search, they will be asked to be present. They are to remain calm and non-disruptive. However, there are times when a youth is out of self-control or is threatening and it is necessary to look for things harmful to themselves or others.
Personal Possessions- Clothes, Music, Hair, Jewelry

Q: Can I bring personal possessions to Youth Care & Beyond Inc.?
A: Of course you can. We are family style. It is a good idea to fix up your room with pictures and stuffed animals or posters so that you know it is your own room. Of course, private television sets or phones and things like that are not permitted in a youth’s room. We don’t recommend them for any youth’s room, even when you are home.

Q: Are there guidelines for things like clothing, jewelry, and hair?
A: The answer is yes. We review these guidelines at the admission meeting so that the youth and family know and understand them. Girls’ hair must be your natural color (not bleached or orange). If you bleach it, we will ask you to return it to your natural color. Hair needs to be neatly combed and styled. Tanning booths, tattoos, tongue studs, naval piercing, nose piercing, lip piercing, as well as more than one earring, etc. are not necessary for getting better. Often, these “trends” are really just a way to express anger towards. So, we don’t allow them even if they are free. Expectations to this guideline may be made for medical or treatment reasons only.

Youth are asked to wear clothing that represents and shows respect for themselves and the Youth Care & Beyond Inc. Program. It is important that each youth dress in such a way that his or her appearance does not attract undue attention to herself/himself. How a person looks on the outside reflects how they feel on the inside.

Q: Who will pay for my clothing?
A: We like our boys and girls look good because looking good is the first step in changing. Looking good helps us feel better. And it helps others have a good impression of us. Parents, guardians, and agency staff are to remember that when a child comes we make a basic list of clothing that they have with them. Clothing that is inappropriate is sent back home. We decide what is inappropriate for treatment. Keep in mind that Youth Care & Beyond Inc. is like most families across America. Each of our homes has a budget. We want you to be dressed nicely. But we don’t want to waste money. So, we can’t use our money to purchase expensive designer clothes or
shoes. If you can find designer clothes in a discount store at a reasonable price that is okay. On the other hand, part of getting better is to learn what is important in life. The most important things in life are friendship, kindness, spirituality, generosity, a big heart and learning. Designer clothes are not a big priority. It’s good for us to learn this when we are young. Nice clothes send a good message. Overly expensive clothes do not send that good message. Advertising tells teenagers they are valuable only because of what they have or wear. That is false. You are valuable because of who you are: a good, honest, kind, generous person. You are not valuable because of what you have.

Q: What types of clothes can I wear?
A: We do have some rules about clothes you can wear. We understand there are many trends in clothing right now and they will change with the times as they always have. We feel pants can be baggy but not sag. This means they can be two sizes bigger than your waist size. Dorags can be worn to bed or with special permission around the house. Hat may not be worn inside. When they are worn, they are to be straight forward or straight back. Clothes may not be too tight or too small. Clothes that are not appropriate will be returned to your family, guardian or caseworker.

Q: Can I listen to any type of music I want?
A: I will bet you already know the answer. There are all kinds of good music that is very appropriate for kids. We very much encourage our youth to enjoy and appreciate music of all varieties. At the same time, we work very hard to teach our kids that music with inappropriate messages has one purpose and that is for that group to make a lot of money at your expense. If you choose play music loud enough that Family Model staff can hear, and the music is inappropriate we will return the CD or Ipod home. If you play music in headphones and not share the music with others you may listen to it.
Medications, Smoking, Drugs, and other Contraband

Q: Do I have to take medication?

A: We believe that medication in some situations can help people with different conditions. For example if you have a cold, we will probably offer you medication for that. However we will not force you to take medication. If you are prescribed medications we will make sure you have them and e will have you take it in front of us to ensure you have taken it. We have a list of medication approved by a doctor to make sure it is safe for most teens to take. You will not be able to take anything other than those medications without a prescription from your doctor.

You may not take vitamins here. Most doctors don’t prescribe them for daily use. We will ensure you get balanced meals.

Q: Can I smoke?

A: I’ll bet you already know the answer is no. Smoking really is bad for your health. Just about everybody knows that now. So, we don’t want you to hurt your health. The same is true for snuff and chewing tobacco.

Q: Can we use alcohol?

A: I don’t even have to tell you what the answer is. You already know. Many of us come from alcoholic families. We have seen the effects of alcoholism in the lives of our brothers, sisters, parents and relatives. We’ve seen the results in the lives of our friends, with a little reflection, each of you knows in your heart of hearts that drinking alcohol may be fun, but it doesn’t bring you any happiness. It brings you just the opposite.

Q: What about marijuana and other drugs?

A: You already know the answer. Look at the lives of people who have been ruined. Perhaps, they are even members of your family. So, our job is to help you stay away from them, and if you have an addiction, our job is to help you move on to the road of recovery.
In addition, drugs are illegal, and we have an obligation to report drug possession, drug use, or drug sale to the police and we take that obligation very seriously.

Q: What is considered contraband?
A: Contraband is anything else that is not permitted to have. You don’t have to use it or have it out to be considered contraband. It could be a lighter, inappropriate pictures, a cell phone, etc. There will be harsher consequences for contraband and your placement could also be in jeopardy.

This book can not possible cover everything. I’m sure while you are here you will find a few more rules or things you can or can not do. There is no way to write it all down but we wanted to give you the basics.
Outings, Jobs, & Freedom

Q: Do we ever have outings?
A: Yes we do. There are a few outings that are a part of your treatment here, such as group skill building, youth group, and other social activities that may be chosen by your treatment team. But we also go to movies, skating, bowling, and other activities. There is a budget we have to stay in so we also try to add in some activities at home.

Q: Can I have a job?
A: Yes. We feel working is important and will support you. But because we have overnight staff we have to show the state that we are helping you stay out of trouble. So we ask that you are on the weekly system and that your treatment team agrees that you can have a job. It is based on your trust so make sure you are really ready before you ask. If you do get a job we will ask that you only work 10-15 hours. Experts say teens who work more than that, usually start to struggle in school.

Q: Can I take a walk, go the mall, etc?
A: Unfortunately you can not. As we mentioned above, our agreement says to the state that you are in our care and we can reach you within a minute if needed. Going for a walk or dropping you off at the mall without staff is a violation of our agreement with them.
www.YouthCareAndBeyond.org